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ABSTRACT

The HEW National Strategy for Youth Development Model is promoted as a community-based planning and procedural tool designed to enhance positive youth development and prevent delinquency. To investigate the relationship between the percentage of youths endorsing particular needs and problems and the relative predictiveness these items bear on self-reported delinquency (SRD), 1,037 male and female youths, aged 10-19, representing a 4 percent random sample of one county in the demonstration project area, completed the HEW Youth Needs Assessment Instrument. The instrument contains 53 problems and needs grouped into 11 clusters: employment, employment/discrimination, drugs, medical care, school, school/discrimination, police/legal, police/discrimination, parents/home, neighborhood, and recreation. Items are endorsed "yes/no" as being a problem and then the degree of seriousness is represented on a three-point scale. An analysis of the results showed no relationship between the youth needs/problems endorsement percentages and corresponding SRD predictive power. The more frequently endorsed items were not more SRD predictive. Although correlations between needs and SRD were found on 10 of the 53 items, allowing a forecasting efficiency of about 20 percent, further research needs to identify the extent to which knowledge of frequency and seriousness ratings, in addition to percentage endorsement of needs, can contribute to SRD and thereby serve as a starting point for community programming. (Author/BL)

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Predicting self-reported delinquency level in a general youth sample via the HEW youth development model's Youth Needs Assessment Instrument.

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ABSTRACT

The ratings of 1,037 youth who comprised a roughly 4% systematic random sample in the school systems of one out of several county demonstration sites were analyzed to study the relationship between the percentage of youth endorsing particular needs and problems, and the relative predictiveness these items bore on self-reported delinquency (SRD). No relationship was found. The more frequently endorsed items were not more SRD predictive. However, ten of the fifty-three needs/problems were SRD predictive ($\underline{R}$ = . 59) allowing a Forcasting Efficiency of about 20%, that is, a 20% reduction in errors of SRD prediction from a knowledge of $\underline{R}$ between SRD and the needs/problems answered "yes/no". Including information on the degree to which youth found "yes" endorsed items a problem, and the extent of attending seriousness perceived, might improve SRD prediction and provide a better basis for community youth programming aimed at positive youth development and delinquency reduction.

Predicting delinquency level in a general youth sample via the HEW youth development model's Youth Needs Assessment Instrument

The HEW Office of Youth Development's National Strategy for Youth Development Model (Elliott et.al., Note 1) serves as the theoretical context for examining juvenile delinquency level in this study. The HEW model was promoted as a community-based planning and procedural tool designed to enhance positive youth development and prevent delinquency through a process of youth needs assessment, the development of needs targeted programs, and program impact evaluation. Many assessment tools are employed in the above stated process: a problems and needs section; a knowledge of agencies questionnaire; a demographic information section; and a series of Impact Scales. Previous research has dealt with the structural validity of Impact Scales (Brennan and Huizinga, Note 2, Truckenmiller, 1978, Note 3, Note 4, 1983a) and the predictive validity of the Impact Scales with respect to both general delinquency (Brennan and Huizinga, Note 2; Truckenmiller, 1982, 1983b); also specific aspects of delinquency such as wanton assaultiveness, vandalism, drug and alcohol use; assaultive robbery, and gang fight participation (Truckenmiller, 1983c, 1983d, 1983e, Note 5, Note 6) The present study turns to the predictive utility of the Youth Needs Assessment Instrument (Elliott et. al. Note 1) with respect to general delinquency as measured by the HEW self-reported delinquency (SRD) scale (Elliott et.al., Note 1).

The Youth Needs Assessment Instrument contains a core of fifty-three problems and needs logically grouped into eleven Need/Problem Clusters:

Employment, Employment/Discrimination, Drugs, Medical Care, School/General, School Discrimination; Police/Legal, Police/Discrimination, Parents/Home, Neighborhood, and Recreation. However these clusters are not formal psychometric scales. The items are endorsed "yes/no" as a personal problem by each student; if yes, then how often and how serious did each perceive the problem to be are indicated on the three point scales labeled "Once or Twice", "Sometimes", and "Very Often" for frequency; and "Not Serious", "Somewhat Serious", and "Very Serious" for the degree of seriousness. The Self-Reported Problematic and Delinquency Behavior section (SRD Scale) is composed of nineteen items which deal with various forms of problematic and delinquent behavior such as drug use, running away, truancy, vandalism, theft, and gang fighting. The Youth Needs items answered yes/no serve as the predictor items and the SRD scale serves as the "dependent variable". Eight Cronbach Alpha reliability figures for SRD as a function of various ethnic/sex groups range from .846 to .961 (Brennan and Huizinga, Note 2), very acceptable reliability figures.

METHOD

Subjects

The subjects were 1,037 males and females, ages 10-19 years old who comprised a 4% roughly systematic random sample of youth drawn from schools in one county base of a multi-county demonstration project.[1]

Procedure

Materials consisted of the HEW Youth Needs Assessment Instrument (Elliott Et. al. Note 1) given in the Pennsylvania Youth Services Systems demonstration project described in Lombardo, 1977, and Truckenmiller, Skok, and Lennon, 1978). Proctors were on hand to help with difficulties. Confidentiality, a foremost consideration, was maintained

by the use of respondent identification numbers rather than names and the protection of all information such that individuals could not be identified. A stepwise multiple regression analysis of Youth Needs items on SRD was run using a BMDP statistical package (Dixon, 1981). The percentage of youth endorsing each item was calculated and a Spearman rank order correlation (r_s) between the order of extraction and endorsement percentages was obtained. Indices of Forcasting Efficiency (Guilford, 1965, pg. 377, 378) were calculated corresponding to the final R; R of the first four most SRD predictive variables; and R for the most SRD predictive variable.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows a summary of variables successively extracted via stepwise multiple regression. Table 2 gives the items by identification code and the corresponding R, R^2, increase in R^2 at each step, and F-to-enter at each step.

Insert Tables 1 and 2 about here

The variables predictive of SRD in order of successive extraction were: YN 35, "Being picked on or hassled by the police"; YN 39, "Courts are unfair": YN 25,"Being expelled or suspended from school"; YN 37, "Friends getting arrested", YN 30, "Police treat things more seriously than they should"; YN 33, "Police aren't really interested in helping kids"; YN 36, "Police being more strict with boys than girls"; YN 50, "Street fights and gangs in neighborhoods", YN 28, "Not enough school counselors"; YN 11, "Being hassled by other kids to use or buy drugs";

YN 47, "People in your neighborhood not knowing or caring about each other". A final $R = .594$, $p \leq .0005$, 2 tail was obtained accounting for about 35% of SRD variance. The first four variables accounted for about 31% of the variance with $R = .556$, $p \leq .0005$, 2 tail. The most predictive variable, YN 35, "Being picked on or hassled by police" correlated $r = .386$ with SRD giving an $r^2 = .149$. Corresponding Indices of Forcasting Efficiency were $E = 19.55\%$, 16.88%, and 7.74% respectively. The percentage of endorsements per need/problem ranged from 7.33% for YN 50, "Street fights and gangs in your neighborhood" to 33.85% for YN 47, "People in your neighborhood not knowing or caring about each other" with a median of 15.81% for YN 28, "Not enough school counselors". A Spearman rank correlation coefficient, $r_s = -.25$, $p \geq .05$, 2 tail, was obtained between the order of predictive extraction and the percentage of needs/problems endorsements by youth for each item.

Table 3 shows the ten most frequently endorsed items. These are YN 51, "Not enough different kinds of things to do"; YN 52, "Entertainment and recreational things cost too much"; YN 24, "Students not having any say in how schools are run"; YN 46, "Parents not understanding kids problems"; YN 17, "Teachers, counselors, or school principals not understanding kids"; YN 4, "Unable to get a job because of your age"; YN 21, "Not enough classes or courses which are useful or really important", YN 20, "Not enough different kids of classes or courses at school"; YN 53, "Recreation, school, or community centers are not open when you want them to be"; and YN 22, "Teachers not understanding you".

Insert Table 3 about here

DISCUSSION

For practical purposes, the most salient findings were: first, there was virtually no relationship between the youth needs/problems endorsement percentages and corresponding SRD predictive power; and second, SRD prediction via needs/problems "yes/no" endorsement was very weak. As was shown in the Results section, the final $\underline{R}$ = .594, though highly statistically significant, yielded an Index of Forcasting Efficiency ($\underline{E}$ = 19.55%) such that the percentage reduction in errors of SRD prediction by virtue of $\underline{R}$ = . 594 between SRD and the needs/problems endorsements was for all practical purposes quite low. Very clearly, community planners should not take need/problems endorsement percentages as a strong guide to formulating youth needs based program objectives with any expectation that such programs will reduce delinquency unless there is an extremely strong correspondence between percentage endorsement and predictive power. For example, the need/problem "Not enough different kinds of things to do", the most heavily endorsed of the items (64% of the youth endorsed this item) was unrelated to SRD variance, while the item "Being picked on or hassled by police", endorsed by 14% of the youth was the item most predictive of SRD. However, even here, the SRD Index of Forcasting Efficiency was only 7.74%. What needs to be studied yet is the extent to which a knowledge of frequency and seriousness ratings in addition to percentage endorsement of needs/problems can contribute to the prediction of SRD and thereby better serve as a starting point for the formulation of youth needs based community programming. It might be added that even where high correlations are obtained, such correlations are at best suggestive of possible cause and effect relationships. It should also be remembered

that the HEW model is a model of synergistic interactions rather than linear cause and effect relationships. For example, once a youth is actively engaged with the criminal justice system, being picked on or hassled by the police and engaging in delinquent acts would be viewed as reciprocally interactive events rather than cause and effect events. In any event, where covariation of youth needs and problems with SRD is established, the identified needs/problems should serve as but initial guides to further youth needs inquiries.

Footnotes

1. This research was supported by a grant from the Crime Prevention Program for Juveniles from the Office of Children, Youth, and Families, Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare. Joseph A. Skok, Pennsylvania Department of Education, was the Multi-county Project Director. William P. Lennon was director of the county project which provided the data for this report. James L. Truckenmiller was the senior research and evaluation associate for the Pennsylvania Project and wishes to express his indebtedness to the many people too numerous to list.

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Table 1

Summary Table of the

Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis of HEW Youth Needs Assessment Instrument Items Predictive of Self-Reported Delinquency (SRD).

Variable	Multiple R	Multiple R^2	Increase in R^2	F-to-Enter
YN35	.3857	.1488	.1488	180.8939
YN39	.4794	.2299	.0811	108.8735
YN25	.5269	.2777	.0478	68.3509
YN37	.5559	.3090	.0313	46.8091
YN30	.5695	.3243	.0153	23.4188
YN33	.5770	.3330	.0086	13.3285
YN36	.5820	.3387	.0057	8.8924
YN50	.5852	.3424	.0037	5.8280
YN28	.5883	.3461	.0037	5.7745
YN11	.5914	.3498	.0037	5.8216
YN47	.5938	.3526	.0028	4.5041

Note: The full items are listed in Table 2. YN35 = hassled by police; YN39 = courts unfair; YN25 = expelled, suspended from school; YN37 = friends arrested; YN30 = police too serious; YN33 = police not interested in helping kids; YN36 = police more strict with boys than girls; YN50 = street fights and gangs in neighborhood; YN28 = not enough school counselors; YN11 = hassled by kids to use, buy drugs; YN47 = mutual uncaring in neighborhood.

Table 2

The HEW Youth Needs Assessment Instrument Items, Corresponding Codes, and Endorsement Percentages.

Item Code	Item	%Endorsement
YN35	"Being picked on or hassled by the police."	14 18%
YN39	"Courts are unfair."	8.00%
YN25	"Being expelled or suspended from school."	10.99%
YN37	"Friends getting arrested."	27.00%
YN30	"Police treat things more seriously than they should."	30.57%
YN33	"Police aren't really interested in helping kids."	26.04%
YN36	"Police being more strict with boys than girls."	22.08%
YN50	"Street fights and gangs in neighborhood."	7.33%
YN28	"Not enough school counselors."	15.81%
YN11	"Being hassled by other kids to use or buy drugs."	13.21%
YN47	"People in your neighborhood not knowing or caring about each other."	33.85%

Note: the items are presented in order of extraction via stepwise multiple regression analysis.

Table 3

The Percentage of "Yes" Endorsements for the Ten Most Frequently Endorsed Youth Needs Assessment Instrument Items.

Item		% Endorsement
YN51	"Not enough different kinds of things to do."	63.65%
YN52	"Entertainment and recreational things cost too much."	61.81%
YN24	"Students not having any say in how schools are run."	57.09%
YN46	"Parents not understanding kids problems."	56.41%
YN17	"Teachers, counselors or school prinicpals not understanding kids."	55.64%
YN4	"Unable to get a job because of your age."	42.82%
YN21	"Not enough classes or courses which are useful or really important."	40.69%
YN20	"Not enough different kinds of classes or courses at school."	37.32%
YN53	"Recreation, school or community centers are not open when you want them to be."	35.49%
YN22	"Teachers not understanding you."	35.00%